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Commissioner

*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*  
*Executive Office of Health*  
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*Massachusetts Commission*  
*for the*  
*Deaf and Hard of Hearing*

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To: MCDHH Staff and Community Members  
From: Heidi Reed, Commissioner, MCDHH  
Date: September 8, 2005  
Re: Support for Hurricane Katrina Survivors

As you know, Massachusetts is preparing for at least 250 survivors to arrive this afternoon, at Otis Air Force Base on Cape Cod. The Commonwealth's Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) is coordinating a massive team effort to provide support services. The Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH) is involved in these large scale preparations, along with many other state agencies, such as the Dept. of Public Health and the Dept of Mental Health. This message is sent to provide an update on action taken, and also to advise you of opportunities to donate or volunteer.

We do not yet know the demographics, but anticipate that people who are Deaf and hard of hearing will be among the survivors. MCDHH has an ASL interpreter, a Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI), and an assistive listening system in place at Otis AFB.

Two MCDHH staff members, a senior administrator and a program supervisor, arrived at Otis Tuesday morning to provide basic communication access training to frontline workers. The frontline workers will process the survivors through stations for registration, ID cards, health screenings, housing, and other essential supports. Visible signage with symbols for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services and sign language interpreters is in place to guide people to the station where communication access is ready.

MCDHH's Case Management and Social Services Department and Communication Access Training & Technology Services are on alert. The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Independent Living Services (DHILS) at CORD (Cape Organization for Rights of the Disabled) is on alert and provided the assistive listening system which is being used at Otis today.

MCDHH's Emergency Referral is handling ASL and CDI interpreter arrangements, and as the week evolves, Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) services may be needed too.

MCDHH staff will be assessing other communication related supports for survivors at the AFB; we want to connect with the appropriate entities to ensure that telephone banks are accessible, and ensure that any computer banks include video relay service capacity.

Massachusetts legislators approved up to \$25 million dollars to assist the survivors here in our state. Also, Governor Mitt Romney is actively seeking donations and volunteers. For details about volunteering or making a donation, please go to the state government website, [www.Mass.Gov](http://www.Mass.Gov). If you have a specific question for MCDHH, please feel welcome to contact us by traveling to the MCDHH site; through executive branch on the Mass.Gov website. Several of you have already conveyed your commitment to helping provide a deeply caring and supportive welcome. Many, many thanks!